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IAC-D-50/7  
16 August 1955

I N T E L L I G E N C E   A D V I S O R Y   C O M M I T T E E

Criteria for Determining

Priority National Intelligence Objectives

1. On 16 August the IAC approved the attached statement of criteria to be used in determining the priority national intelligence objectives based on the comprehensive objectives set forth in DCID 4/3.

2. These criteria will therefore be used in arriving at a revision of the present list of priority objectives as set forth in DCID 4/4, and in making subsequent semi-annual revisions.

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Secretary

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CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING  
PRIORITY NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE OBJECTIVES

1. Priority National Intelligence Objectives should be directly related to the intelligence required in the formulation and execution of national security policy. They should flow directly from the intelligence mission as set forth by the NSC and are therefore merely more detailed specifications of the intelligence required to fulfill that mission. They should provide the basis for determining appropriate research and collection requirements.
2. Most of the intelligence required in the formulation and execution of national security policy will be the product of normal intelligence collection and research. Priority National Intelligence Objectives should be limited to those critical factors which require special attention and effort.
3. In order to afford a stable basis for intelligence planning, a statement of Priority National Intelligence Objectives should be designed to remain valid over an extended period. It should therefore exclude topics of urgent, but transitory, interest, which will require and receive ad hoc treatment in any case.
4. Broad generalities are of little practical use as priority guidance to collection and research. Priority National Intelligence Objectives should therefore be specific enough to provide guidance for planning the allocation of collection and research resources, but not so specific as to constitute in themselves research and collection requirements.
5. Although all items in a statement of Priority National Intelligence Objectives should be worthy of special attention, it is obvious that some will be of greater urgency or importance than others. Any listing of such objectives must be based on an analysis of the world situation and US security interests and should be reviewed semi-annually. The following criteria will serve as guidance for determining the relative importance of Priority National Intelligence Objectives.
  - I. First Priority Intelligence Objectives are those which will permit the US: (a) to anticipate and counter those policies or actions of foreign states which would occasion gravest consequences to the US; and (b) to stimulate policies or actions of foreign states (or actions within them) which could occasion greatest benefit to the US.

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- II. Second Priority Intelligence Objectives are those which will permit the US: (a) to anticipate and counter those policies or actions of foreign states which would have serious consequences for the US; and (b) to stimulate policies or actions of foreign states (or actions within them) which could occasion great benefit to the US.
- III. Third Priority Intelligence Objectives are those which will permit the US: (a) to anticipate and counter those policies or actions of foreign states which would have harmful consequences to the US; and (b) to stimulate policies or actions of foreign states (or actions within them) which could occasion substantial benefits to the US.